

MILFORD FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

The Infant and Toddler Times

JUDY LOBDELL, EDITOR

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Dates to Remember

January

13th. Playgroups Begin.

20th. Martin Luther King Day.
Center closed.

Happy



Now that wintertime is upon us, **playgroups are cancelled if there is a delayed opening or school closing.** You can find this information on the milforded.org website, as well as local radio stations, such as WICC 600 and television stations, such as channel 6 and 8 and cablevision channel 12.

The Milford Family Resource Center
@Mathewson School
466 West River Street
Milford, CT 06461
(203)783-3626
mfrf@milforded.org

Milford Family Resource Center Staff:
Program Manager:
Peggy Kelly
Parent Educators:
Kathy Aspinwall
Judy Lobdell
Anne Mundy

Why Babies Babble

We all know that it would be hard to resist responding to a baby's babbling. It turns out, it's intentional on their part to engage their caregivers in participating in communication about their world. Researchers (Goldstein et al) from Cornell's Behavioral Analysis of Beginning Years (B.A.B.Y.) Laboratory found that babbling in babies brings about those changes in adult speech. They went on to note that the babies were initiating this interaction in order to gain the attention of the adult in the room, concluding that the babies were designing their environment in order to make their language learning easier. To this end, parents and caregivers are generally drawn to respond with simplified language that facilitates the process!* Even grown men have been known to succumb to *parentese*, that high pitched exaggerated simplified speech that adults use with babies that is often prompted by baby babble.



Carrying this a step further, Julie Gros-Louis, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Iowa and corresponding author of a 2014 study, "Maternal Responsiveness and the Development of Directed Vocalizing and Social Interactions," found that how parents respond to their infants' babbling sounds may foster their infants' language skills. "What researchers discovered is infants whose mothers responded to what they thought their babies were saying, showed an increase in developmentally advanced, consonant-vowel vocalization". This type of interaction just helped accelerate those infants whose mothers were very responsive.*

In relation to this finding, researchers at The University of Iowa found that in order to reap the language-boosting benefits of responding to your baby's babbles, your responses must be thoughtful: Listening, trying to figure out what she's communicating, labeling, elaborating and using nonverbal cues like eye contact, facial expressions and gestures. ***

The takeaway from all this is that *how* parents speak to their infants may be as important as how often they do it.

In looking at ways to enhance language development, at babysparks.com, they explored the idea that "language is so much more than words" When we think of babies language development, their first words comes to mind. Speech, though, is just one aspect of language, which encompasses three main areas:

Receptive Language: Understanding language that communicates thoughts, feelings, ideas or concepts.

Expressive Language: Using language to communicate thoughts, feelings, ideas or concepts.

Pragmatic Language: Using language to navigate social situations, including nonverbal cues.

Responding to your baby's babbling in a meaningful way, exposes her to all three areas of language, through varying tones of voice, facial expressions, and gestures—long before she says her first word! ***

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Here are some of the ways meaningful responses to your baby's babble can maximize her language development:

Encourages Back-and-Forth Communication

"Speech-language pathologist, Mandy Alvarez, highlights that responding to your baby's babbling reinforces the reciprocal nature of communication. "

So when your baby says "ma" and you respond back it motivates her to babble more , just like when your baby claps and you clap back it also introduces her to the give and take of pragmatic language that involves eye contact, taking turns and listening.

An additional benefit of back-and-forth communication is that it introduces your baby to pragmatic language skills like eye contact, turn-taking and listening.

Spending time figuring out what she is looking at or saying allows you to elaborate and expand on what she is trying to communicate, building her receptive understanding of language

Labeling and elaborating in this way helps build your baby's vocabulary. Because receptive language develops before expressive language, she will understand many words before she is able to say one.

Builds Nonverbal Language Skills

Nonverbal language is an enormous part of human interaction and it is one of your baby's first ways to learn language. Tone of voice, facial expression, body position, and gestures all communicate much more than the words we say. Engaging responses to babbling teach your baby that non-verbal cues have meaning (Mom's making eye contact, that means she's listening; Mom's smiling, that means I should keep going). You will notice her mimic and eventually use nonverbal language herself.

Alvarez emphasizes that learning how to read and use nonverbal language is one of the key elements of social communication, or being able to relate to others and navigate the complex nuances of social interactions. In addition to teaching your baby invaluable language skills, your engaging interactions help her develop the skills she needs to communicate effectively. These playful connections are 'powerful tools in your toolbox' that can be accomplished daily in about 20 minutes time throughout the day and during feedings, diaper changes, etc. ***

For further information, check out these websites:

*https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-08/cu-bbb082119.php

**<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/newsroom/releases/110614-podcast-infant-babbling>

***<https://babysparks.com/2017/07/03/babble-back-how-meaningful-responses-to-babbling-boost-language-skills/>



There are still openings in our playgroups for certain days this semester. If you are a Milford resident with a child(ren) ages 4 months - 3+ years old, you can reach us by phone at 203 783-3626 or email at mfrf@milforded.org



Holiday Concert 2019 Featuring The Learning Station

We had great Fun!

*A big Thank you to our sponsors:
The Milford Bank
Berchem and Moses*



More pictures on pages 4-7



Playgroup
Fun





The Milford Family Resource Center is grateful for Subway employees' generosity



We lift ourselves up when we lift up others.

On behalf of the families who received gifts through the Milford Family Resource Center Christmas Holiday Gift Program, we thank the following:

Subway Headquarters Staff for their continued generosity every year to Milford families, thank you!

St. Mary parishioners, thank you!

Atomic Kids Staff

Toys for Tots, thank you!

The Champagne family, Thank you!

Patti Rutherford and her family, thank you!

Diane Zangi and her family, thank you!

Bethany Gilman and the Foran High School Students and staff

Milford Boys and Girls Club

As well as several individuals and families (not listed) who generously contributed gifts to our families

The response from our families was very touching as they came by to collect their gifts.



Mary King, Thank you for your generous donation



Thank you to the Staff at Atomic Kids



Thank you to Jessica Simons and her family who donated bikes and wonderful gifts to a local family.



*Santa's Helpers
Thanks guys,
We couldn't have
done it without you!*





*Thank you for your generosity,
Foran students*



Thank you, Toys for Tots

Milford Salvation Army Service Unit



The Milford Salvation Army is seeking volunteers to join the Service Unit, here in Milford.

The Service Unit works collaboratively with the United Way of Milford, the Milford Family Resource Center, the Milford Human Services Department, St. Mary's Parish, and the Keeping Milford Warm Program to assist families in need throughout the year.

We meet quarterly but respond quickly to referrals for assistance.

If you are seeking the opportunity to join a vibrant group of volunteers who are working to do the most good in Milford, contact us at pkelly@milforded.org

See photo with High School Students collecting funds for the Salvation Army Kettle Campaign.

With them are State Representatives Charles Ferraro and Kathleen Kennedy as well as Lesley Darling of the Milford Human Services Department



A final note on generosity....

Jessica Simons and her children, who contributed two bicycles as well as other gifts to a Milford family, connected the Milford Family Resource Center and the Milford Fire Department's Toys for Tots with Dave Fowler, Executive Director, of the non profit Bikes for Kids.

Through this connection, 30 bicycles, helmets and lights were donated to the Toys for Tots program. The Milford Firemen picked up the bikes a day prior to the Toys for Tots distribution of thousands of toys to Milford parents.

We are happy to report that all 30 bikes were chosen by parents for their children.

A huge thank you to the Simons family, Dave Fowler of Bikes for Kids and the Milford Fire Department for making this possible.



Bikes for Kids is a Connecticut based organization that brings smiles to children one **bike** at a time. The volunteers collect, repair and safety test donated used **bicycles**. The refurbished **bicycles** along with new helmets are given away to individuals of all ages and needs.

